

[The Travancore and Cochin Ornithological Surveys failed to meet with this bird. Sálím Ali in his report on the Surveys (*Journ., Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*, Vol. 39, p. 574) writes:—

'Ferguson (*J.B.N.H.S.*, xvi, 5) procured a single specimen of this crake in 1875 in some paddy fields near the foot of the hills in South Travancore at about 400 ft. elevation. There is, according to Mr. Whistler, one Travancore specimen labelled "Mynall" with no other data in the British Museum (Hume Collection), and a second also without data, collected by Fry. It occurs in Ceylon.

Breeding.—No information available for Travancore or Cochin.'

Mr. Jackson wrote in later to say that he had seen this species again on 22nd November.—EDS.]

16. FOOD OF THE BULL FROG

This letter is many years over-due. I could find many excuses, but honesty would reject them all, leaving only sheer inertia.

The District Judge of Ratnagiri lives in a delightful old rambling sandstone house, of which the ground floor is his Court and Office. From the residential verandas one looks down on to a charming garden backed by a patch of forest. A bird-bath which I chipped out of a sandstone block and sank almost flush with the ground used to give me hours of fascinating entertainment.

Near the centre of the garden there is a small deep rectangular tank—the mali's water storage point. A Whitebreasted Kingfisher had a habit of plunging into this tank every afternoon (presumably for fun or refreshment, since there were no fishes in it). And a huge Bull-frog used to squat in the grass at the side of the tank (which was totally sunk in the ground) all day long.

One afternoon, as I studied some case-papers, my daughter came running to me with a very bedraggled Kingfisher in her hand. She had heard a frantic splashing in the tank, and on going to investigate, she found the Kingfisher in the water, all but drowned, tightly clasped by the bull-frog from behind. Evidently the frog had leaped on the bird's back exactly as it dived, and had gripped it round the wings so that it could not escape—a real wrestler's hold! My daughter and I carefully dried the Kingfisher and placed it in the sunshine; after an hour it flew away. The bull-frog was sentenced to banishment from the garden, the sentence being carried out forthwith.

What was the frog's intention? Did he plan to eat the bird? If so, he might doubtless have avenged the deaths of countless small cousins and remoter relatives. But how would he have digested that formidable beak? Have you a record of any similar murderous onslaught?

'SEVAGRAM',
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T. GAY

December 24, 1953.